

## **Energy Communities Alliance Meets with Secretary of Energy Ernest Moniz to Highlight the Role of Local Governments**

On June 23, the Energy Communities Alliance (ECA) Executive Board met with Secretary of Energy Ernest Moniz to highlight the importance of the Department of Energy's (DOE) environmental cleanup, national security, nuclear energy and waste management missions. The ECA Executive Board, including Chair Mayor Tom Beehan from Oak Ridge, TN and other elected local government officials also stressed the importance of regular communication and partnership between DOE and the local governments that are adjacent to DOE facilities. Secretary Moniz agreed that working with local governments is important to the success of DOE.

Earlier in the day, the ECA Executive Board also met with National Nuclear Security Administration (NNSA) Administrator Frank Klotz, Acting Assistant Secretary for Environmental Management Dave Huizenga, and other DOE and Administration officials, as well as congressional staff.

Mayor Beehan stated that local governments can be DOE's asset for gaining support for missions and for infrastructure development at the sites, but that for that to occur local governments must be involved in decision-making. Mayor Beehan also stressed the importance of land transfer to local communities.

ECA Secretary Mayor Steve Young, Kennewick, WA offered up his experience in dealing with the Hanford Site, noting that it is much easier to resolve issues that come up at a site when the DOE manager already has a strong working relationship with the local government.

ECA Treasurer Councilor Fran Berting from Los Alamos stated that DOE should ensure that there is regular communication between field/site office officials and local government officials; and that DOE Headquarters leadership and staff should make it a priority to meet with and engage local government and community officials during site visits.

ECA Vice-Chairman Councilmember Chuck Smith from Aiken County, SC identified a concern amongst many communities - the continually changing nature of the mission and the corresponding budget issues. He gave examples from around all of the DOE/NNSA sites where a project was started, identified as a national priority only to be changed, delayed or cancelled. Councilmember Smith highlighted that these changes have an adverse impact on the community, including significant job loss. Secretary Moniz identified that DOE needs to exercise more discipline when developing project budgets and clearly understand the design and costs of the projects. He identified that some projects and their budgets will need to be modified and used CMR and UPF as examples of projects and budgets that have been reviewed and modified.

Other topics addressed in the meeting with Secretary Moniz were: support for the Waste Isolation Pilot Plant (WIPP), and opening it as soon as possible; support for Small Modular Reactors (SMRs); and technology transfer activities; and a solution for the management and disposal of high-level and defense waste. Secretary Moniz confirmed that WIPP is still an essential part of the cleanup mission and committed to opening it as soon and as safely as possible. The Secretary stated that the development of new nuclear technologies, including SMRs, is important

for energy needs in the future. He expressed hope that by proceeding through the testing phase and the initial Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) licensing for SMRs, the initial projects will identify the costs and feasibility of the technology and the potential for use in the United States. He agreed that technology transfer activities are important to both DOE and local communities. Finally, he expressed support for consent-based siting activities and stated that he believes that the next step in nuclear waste management and disposal will be the development of a pilot interim storage site initially targeting waste from decommissioned commercial reactors.

Additional meeting participants included Aiken County Chairman Ronny Young, Oak Ridge City Manager Mark Watson, Savannah River CRO Executive Director Rick McLeod, Los Alamos County Deputy County Administrator Brian Bosshardt.

ECA is the non-profit organization of local governments which host, or are adjacent to DOE sites. For further information contact Seth Kirshenberg, Executive Director of ECA at 202-828-2317 or [sethk@energyca.org](mailto:sethk@energyca.org)